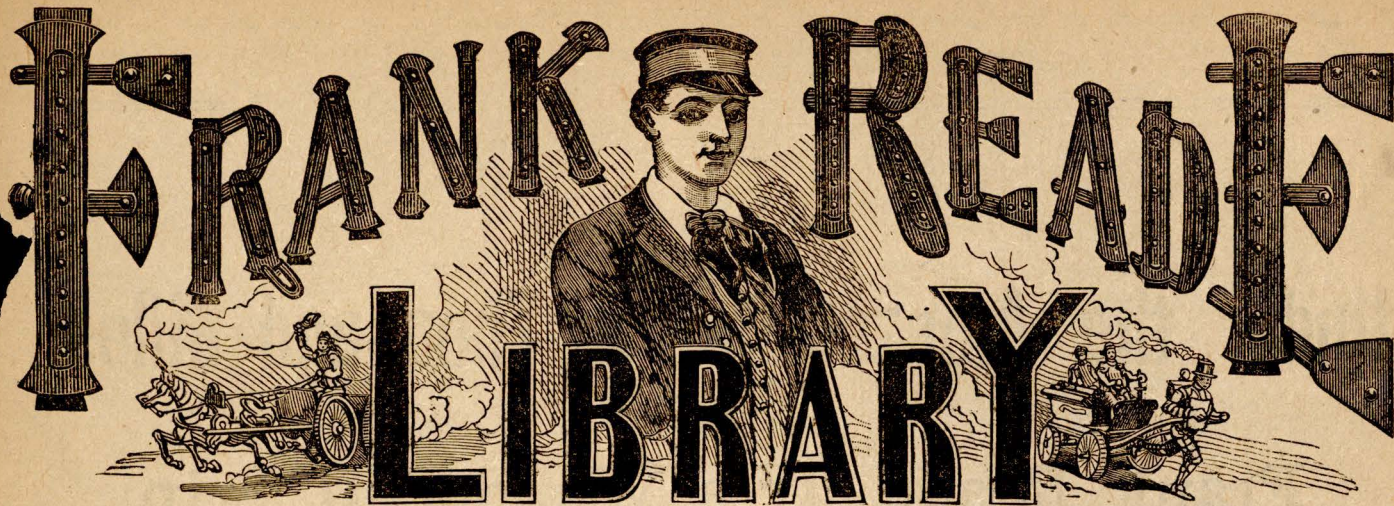


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Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, October 5, 1892.

No. 88. { COMPLETE. } FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 34 & 36 NORTH MOORE STREET, NEW YORK. { PRICE } **Vol. IV.**
New York, August 24, 1894. ISSUED WEEKLY. { 5 CENTS. }

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Under the Amazon

For a Thousand Miles;
OR, FRANK READE, JR.'S WONDERFUL TRIP.
By "NONAME."



The monster came toward him with serpent-like movement. Its massive jaws opened not a foot from Frank's head before he recovered sufficiently to act. Then quick as a flash he whirled the keen bladed pike high over his head and taking cool aim drove it full force down the monster's throat.

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Under the Amazon for a Thousand Miles;

OR,

Frank Reade, Jr.'s Wonderful Trip.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr., and His New Electric Air-Ship the 'Eclipse,'" etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW SUBMARINE BOAT.

"A SUBMARINE boat?" exclaimed Prof. Alexis Smythe of Washington, as he held up his hands in amazement. "Well, I never, what will you strike next, Frank Reade, Jr., Not content with the Steam Man, the Electric Horses and the Electric Air-ship you have now capped the climax and invented a submarine boat."

"That is the truth," replied Frank Reade, Jr., with a modest smile.

"Well, well, I must see this new and wonderful invention!"

"You shall."

Prof. Smythe, a tall, patrician old gentleman with a gray beard, was one of the most distinguished savants of the day.

Frank Reade, Jr., who stood by him was a remarkable type of young man. Tall, straight and handsome, he was possessed of a type of features which betokened intellect of the highest order.

At the moment they were in the office of the extensive shops in Readestown where Frank Reade, Jr., constructed all of his famous inventions.

Smythe had read a reportorial account in the newspapers of Frank Reade, Jr., and his new invention.

At once the learned savant had started for Readestown with a purpose in view.

He at once sought for and obtained an audience with Frank and thus we find him at the opening of our story.

Frank Reade, Jr., arose from his chair after the remark recorded above and touched an electric button.

A moment later the door flew open and a diminutive and comical looking negro stood upon the threshold.

"Pomp, you black rascal, Prof. Smythe wants to take a look at the Search."

"A'right, Marse Frank!" replied the darky, ducking his head. "I jes' go an' find dat I'ish loafer an' we hab tings ready d'reckly."

"Where is Barney?" asked Frank.

"Dunno, sah. De las' time I done see dat good-fo'-nuffin he was steerin' fo' a bar-room on de co'nah. I jes' go an' fin' him!"

"Be quick about it!" said Frank, sharply. "I must say that I don't like this sort of thing at all. If either one of you—"

"Begorra, don't yez belave a worruid that black imp av the devil says, sor!" cried a treble voice, angrily, and a short, broad-shouldered Irishman appeared on the scenes.

He had been dozing upon a bench just outside, and the conversation had awakened him.

He was a comical specimen of humanity. His head was adorned with a shock of red hair, and his mug was as broad and smiling as a ten acre field in the sunlight.

Barney and Pomp were old and trusted servants of Frank Reade, Jr.

They always accompanied him upon his famous trips around the world. They were much devoted to their young master.

"Yez have bin loying about me an' I'll 'ave the loife av yez!" blustered Barney, as he faced Pomp.

"Glory fo' massy!" gasped the nigger. "How eber I knows whar you'se am? Nobody kin ever tell dat. Yo' jes turns up when yo' feels like. Don' yo' git gay wif me, I'ish, or I done brek yo' in two."

"Begorra, yez niver cud spell able!" cried Barney, angrily. "Yez are a sooty son av a sea cook, an' I'll 'ave the ears av yez if yez don't be more civil."

"Hold on there!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., sharply. "Let us have none of that. This is no time for skylarking. Be off, both of you, and get the boat in readiness at once. Lively!"

"All right, sah!" said Pomp.

"Yis, sor!" exclaimed Barney.

And away the two comical characters went to execute their bidding.

They were the warmest of friends and much attached to each other, though fond of playing practical jokes upon each other.

Frank would hardly have been able to get along without their services, or company either, for they were the life of any occasion.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Prof. Smythe. "Are those the sort of employees you have, Frank? Why, I haven't seen their like outside of a comic story book."

"I could hardly dispense with their services."

"Is that so?"

"It is."

"Then they do not allow their skylarking to interfere with their duties?"

"Not at all."

"You are fortunate. Altogether Frank Reade Jr. I think you are a wonderful man!"

"Thank you," replied Frank, with a blush of modesty. "You are too effusive, professor."

"Not a particle."

They sauntered about the yard until at length Barney appeared and said:

"All reight, sor. The Electric Search is ready, sor!"

"Come," said Frank, taking the professor's arm.

Together they crossed the yard to a high gate in a brick wall.

The gate swung back and the professor saw quite a large pond of water or tank with a broad platform all about it.

In the center of the tank floated a strang looking craft.

The professor stared at it.

"The submarine boat!" he gasped. "It is a fact then?"

"A reality!" laughed Frank, as he noted the professor's wonder.

"The impossible has happened!"

"Come and let me show it to you. We will go aboard!"

As the Electric Search lay there in the water of the immense tank it was seen to be a wonderful structure.

In design the hull was much like that of a pleasure yacht, though the bow had a long and sharp ram.

But above the rail there was a long cabin with an oval shaped roof of metal in which were various windows heavily guarded with plate glass and iron netting.

A hand rail extended along the outside of this, and above it was a broad deck extending fore and aft with a hand rail about it also.

Forward was a pilot house with plate glass windows and over it was a search-light of great power.

Practically this was about all there was to describe of the exterior of the submarine boat.

Its curious and wonderful features were all on the inside.

The men crossed on a plank to the deck of the Search.

Pomp had opened the hermitical cabin door in the cabin side and they passed through it. They were within the craft.

The main cabin was a revelation. It was as elegantly furnished as the drawing-room of a fine mansion.

There were all sorts of conveniences, of appliances and comforts.

Rich furniture, luxurious draperies and costly bric-a-brac, and a library of fine books.

Then followed an inspection of the state-rooms, of the mess or dining cabin, the galley or kitchen, and the forward hold where were kept supplies and necessary weapons and ammunition.

All this the professor grew enthusiastic over. But when he descended to the engine room he was spell-bound.

The wonderful electric engines were there, the secret of the construction being known only to Frank.

Also beyond the engine room, was the reservoir or tank, by means of which the boat was lowered or raised at will.

"I have seen all this!" said the professor, finally. "I understand your theory of depression and elevation of the boat. But I do not yet comprehend how you can exist under water without a generous supply of air."

"Nor do we!" replied Frank.

"Ah, but where can you get it?"

Frank laughed.

He put his hand upon a curious-looking valve in one of the partitions.

"Do you see this?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You will notice these at intervals all through the cabin."

"I do."

"These valves are supplied with air from an electric generator which also absorbs the vitiated air as fast as it is created. No part of the boat can be kept unsupplied with the air."

"An electric generator?"

"Yes."

The professor scratched his head a moment and then started for the door which led out upon the deck.

"Come," he said, "I have seen enough. I am satisfied."

"Wait," said Frank. "I have not yet proved the machine to you. You shall see its workings."

"I am satisfied."

But Frank had pressed a valve upon an electric keyboard. Instantly every door and window of the Search closed and was hermetically sealed.

Then Frank pulled open another valve.

There was a sinking sensation and darkness. This latter, however, was only momentary.

Electric lights flashed out upon the air of the cabin. Then there was a slight shock.

"Come here!" said Frank, drawing the professor to a window.

"We are at the bottom of the tank."

This was true.

The professor saw the cemented walls and floor of the tank. They were in twenty eight feet of water.

"The boat has sunk!"

"Yes!" said Frank. "I can raise it however, in a moment of time. But see how plainly the search-light shows objects under water."

"Wonderful!" agreed the professor. "I am satisfied."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Then we will end the inspection now."

Frank touched a valve and the Search flew to the surface.

Both men went out on the dripping deck, and Barney and Pomp ran out the plank for them.

They crossed to the platform.

"It is indeed very wonderful!" declared the professor, "but—"

"What?"

"How do you expect to ever get the boat out into the deep sea?"

Frank pointed to a gate at the lower end of the yard.

"By opening that," he said. "We pass into a canal and through a series of locks down to the river. Thence to the sea."

Prof. Smythe was satisfied, yet he asked one more question:

"Do you think the Search capable of weathering a heavy storm at sea?"

"The boat is constructed for coping with the elements in any part of the world," declared Frank.

They walked in silence to the office at the other end of the yard.

Entering Frank indicated a chair and said:

"Be seated, friend Smythe."

The scientist obeyed.

His brows were knit for a moment as if in thought. Then he cleared his throat.

"No doubt you have wondered somewhat, Frank, what the object of my visit here is?"

"Why, to see the new submarine boat."

"Yes, in part. But there was yet another motive."

Frank looked surprised.

"Indeed!" he exclaimed; "you talk in riddles. What may it be?"

The professor drew a bundle of papers from his pocket and cleared his throat.

"I will tell you," he said.

CHAPTER II.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

THE professor spread his papers out on the table.

Frank at once saw that one of them was a map of Brazil.

He waited with some curiosity for the savant to explain his purpose. This he was not long in doing.

Placing his finger upon the map, Prof. Smythe said:

"You see this is a map of Brazil?"

"I see," replied Frank.

"Right here is the mouth of the Amazon river, which extends four thousand miles across the South American continent."

"Very true."

"Now I have a story to tell you of this very same Amazon river."

Prof. Smythe indicated a marked spot on the map and said:

"Right on this spot there occurred an incident of no little importance about five years ago.

"Captain Paul Davis, with a number of adventurous companions, passed up to the head waters of this branch, the Ica river, in canoes.

"They were fully a year reaching this point. They experienced a legion of adventures in the forests with wild beasts and savage natives.

"At a certain point upon the Ica River they journeyed inland, and came upon a wild region never before visited by white man.

"While traveling through a gulch one day one of the party picked up a shining pebble.

"It was a diamond of tremendous value. So rich a find caused all to lose their heads, and they at once abandoned everything in the search.

"Soon, so well did they succeed, they amassed a large quantity of these precious stones, representing a large fortune.

"It was decided to return to civilization, and reap the reward of their efforts. Accordingly at the small village of Ica, a flat boat was constructed.

"After much labor it was equipped and launched. Then down the river the party started.

"But, arrived at this point which I indicate near a village of Ybarri natives, the boat was attacked by several monsters of the river, apparently giant crocodiles.

"A desperate effort was made to beat them off, but they actually punched holes in the hull of the boat, and it sunk in one hundred feet of water.

"Of the crew only one reached the shore, Captain Davis himself.

"He tried in vain to recover the bag of diamonds. Not a native diver could be persuaded to go down after them, and he had no diving suit to go himself.

"They were apparently destined to remain at the bottom of the Amazon forever. It was a bitter disappointment.

"The giant crocodiles seemed to hold complete possession of the treasure. It could not be recovered.

"Davis made his way to Rio. There was a revolution in progress in the country at that time.

"He was seized and forced into the army. In a naval battle at sea, his ship was blown to pieces and he drifted four days upon a piece of wreckage.

"Then in a dying condition he was picked up by an American steamer and brought to New York.

"I found him in Bellevue Hospital, and there he told me the whole thrilling story and gave me this map."

Frank had been an intensely interested listener throughout the whole of this thrilling narrative.

When the professor had finished he drew a deep breath, and said:

"That is a very exciting story, professor. Indeed, I am interested."

"I knew that you would be!" declared Smythe, with eagerness. "And it is this very subject which I came here to see you upon."

Frank looked puzzled.

"Ah!" was all he said.

"You see," continued the professor, "if one had a submarine boat like yours—"

Frank gave a sharp cry.

"You want me to go there with the Search and attempt to find the diamonds?"

"Yes."

"Of course, I will!"

"You will?" cried Smythe, joyously.

"Certainly. I have been looking for some incentive to a trip of adventure. This is just what I want. About how far up the Amazon is this spot?"

"Fully a thousand miles!"

"A thousand miles under the Amazon!" exclaimed Frank. "Why, I like the idea of that. It could not be better. We shall start very soon."

"But this is not my sole object in view," said Smythe.

"Ah! what else?"

"I will embrace the opportunity to make a study of the aquatic and reptile life of the most perilous of rivers."

"Certainly," agreed Frank.

"We seem to agree upon every point."

"Of course. I think we have struck a rich thing. It is not the pecuniary value of the diamonds I care so much for."

"No," replied Smythe; "I am well aware of the fact that you are rich, Frank; but yet, the diamonds are worth recovering."

"I should say so," agreed the young inventor, "and they shall be recovered if it is within human power."

Prof. Alexis Smythe was in a transport of delight.

He could hardly believe his senses. What a prospect was before him!

He was to enjoy the novelty of a trip one thousand miles under the Amazon in a submarine boat!

How his brother scientists would envy him! How they would regard him with jealous eyes!

How the world would record the famous achievement, and what a contribution to science would be the discoveries he would make!

Thus flattering himself, Smythe conferred with Frank Reade, Jr., a short while longer and then departed for New York to complete preparations.

It had been arranged to start on the twentieth of the month, allowing two weeks for all preparations.

The submarine boat, with Frank Reade, Jr., Prof. Smythe and Barney and Pomp on board, was to proceed down the river to the sea.

Then a straight course was to be made for the mouth of the Amazon.

After the professor had gone Frank called in Barney and Pomp.

He told them of the project.

They were delighted, and executed a breakdown. Pomp stood on his head.

"Ki yi! dat be lots ob fun!" he cried. "Dis chile amn't afraid ob 'gators nor snakes!"

"Begorra, I'll lay two to one yez wud run at the forst soight av one," said Barney.

"Don' yo' get gay wif me, chile," threatened Pomp.

"Bejabers, I don't see nuthin' ter be afraid of. Yez are only a dhirty nayguri!"

"Golly, I hab yo' skin fo' dat, yo' 'fish loafah!" declared Pomp, as he made a start for Barney.

"Hold on!" said Frank, authoritatively. "None of that! There are too many things for you to do just now. Go about them!"

This settled the dispute.

But Pomp made a grimace at Barney and the latter grinned contemptuously.

They were gone the next moment and Frank now went out to also busy himself about the preparations.

Professor Smythe could not keep the good thing to himself.

Before he reached New York every newspaper syndicate in the country had the story and the country was electrified.

It was certainly a wonderful thing to ponder on. A trip under the Amazon the most wonderful and mysterious river of the world was certainly no light project.

All sorts of theories were advanced by visionary reporters.

Some averred that the Search would get stuck in the mud and never be able to extricate itself.

Others that there were huge serpents and marine monsters in the big river which would crush the boat like an egg-shell.

Hosts of letters reached Frank treating upon the subject.

But the young inventor only smiled and said:

"Little they know about it. Let them surmise all they wish!"

Then he coolly went on with his work preparatory to the start. But an incident occurred which came near putting an end to the whole enterprise.

One day Frank received an epistle which read as follows:

"DEAR MR. READE—I am coming to see you upon a subject which is of very vital interest to me. I hope you will not refuse me an audience.

"My darling boy James is somewhere in that desolate country along the Amazon. I once heard that he was held a slave by a tribe of natives. If you could find and help him you will win the undying gratitude of a sorrowing mother.

"Yours hopefully, MRS. SHAW."

Frank's sympathy was naturally aroused.

"Certainly, if I can help the woman I will," he declared.

So the next day when Barney brought in a card bearing the name of Mrs. Shaw, Frank at once said:

"Show the lady in, Barney."

The Celt hesitated.

"Well?" said Frank, impatiently.

"Shure, sor, I don't loike the looks av her. She has a big veil over her face, sor."

"She is a lady in distress, Barney."

"Yis, sor, but—"

"What?"

"Kape yure eye open, sor."

"Nonsense! Show her in."

Barney vanished. A few moments later the door opened and a deeply veiled lady in black walked in.

She bowed, and said in a trembling tone:

"It is so good of you to be kind to an afflicted widow lady."

"Indeed, madam," said Frank, kindly, "I am always pleased to help those in distress."

"I know you are a philanthropist."

"What can I do for you?"

"You can help me much!"

"Pray take the chair."

The woman was drawing nearer every moment. That instant might have been Frank's last but for a fortunate incident.

Just in time he saw the flash of a knife under a fold of the black dress.

He acted instantly.

Like a flash he kicked his chair back from under him and pressed an electric button. There was a clangor of alarm bells.

The disguised assassin now sprang toward Frank like a tiger.

But the young inventor had acted just in the nick of time.

He dodged the blow with the deadly knife, and picking up an iron bar hurled it at the wretch.

It struck him in the shoulder and staggered him for a moment.

Before he could return to the attack into the room sprang Barney and Pomp.

"Begorra, have at the fiend!" cried Barney, wildly. "Shure, I knew he was here for no good purpose!"

"Golly! gib it to him in de neck!" yelled Pomp. "Yo' take him on de right, 'fish!"

Upon the maniac the two strong fellows sprang, and a fierce struggle followed.

But Frank took a hand and the fellow was overpowered.

By this time officers had arrived and they took the fellow in charge. He fought and fumed furiously, but that did no good.

He was a cunning murderer and crank who had meant to take Frank's life for some unknown reason.

He was quickly incarcerated in jail and the episode was over.

But it was a close call for Frank, and a good lookout for cranks was kept after that.

The life of such a man as Frank Reade, Jr., was by far too valuable to be sacrificed in such a way.

CHAPTER III.

EN ROUTE—THE STORM.

EVERYBODY congratulated Frank on his narrow escape.

The expedition under the Amazon would never have been consummated and the incidents of this story not written had it not been for the failure of the crank to accomplish his purpose.

Professor Smythe telegraphed Frank his congratulations from New York.

"DEAR FRANK.—Thank God the assassin's aim failed. I congratulate you. Shall be in Readestown the nineteenth. Yours ever,

"ALEXIS SMYTHE."

On the morning of the twentieth great crowds had gathered in Readestown to see the start of the famous boat.

The banks of the river and the canal were lined with people.

The Search floated in the tank all ready for the start.

The voyagers were all aboard. Frank gave his final instructions to his foreman and then said:

"Open the big gates!"

Instantly this was done.

They began to swing back, and the Search started forward.

She glided out through the big archway and into the canal. One moment she floated there.

She was in full sight of the waiting crowd.

Cheers thundered forth upon the air.

"Hurrah—hurrah!"

Frank stepped out upon the deck and waved a flag. This met with a tremendous response from the crowd.

Down the river started the boat.

Suddenly Frank stepped back into the pilot-house with the other voyagers.

He pressed an electric button.

Instantly every door and window was hermetically sealed.

Then the electric lights flashed forth.

Frank pressed another valve, and the boat took a gentle dip and went plunging under the surface.

The crowd watched agape.

This was furnishing proof of the capabilities of the great invention.

They had seen it sink.

Would it be able to rise?

Expectant, all waited for its reappearance. They were not doomed to disappointment.

Frank let the boat glide along for a ways under the surface.

Perhaps a hundred yards were covered thus. Then he closed the lever and the boat began to rise.

As the water was expelled from the sinking reservoir, the Search sprung out of the water like a duck.

One moment silence fell upon the excited multitude. Then the air was fairly rent with cheers.

"Hurrah for Frank Reade, Jr. Hurrah for the Electric Search!"

Frank appeared again on the bridge with a flag. Then the boat glided on down the canal into the river.

Soon the cheering multitude and the town were left far behind.

The great trip was begun.

Down to the sea in due time the Search made its way without incident.

As the boat could sail faster on the surface than under water, it was kept there in the quick run down the coast.

Southward the Search sailed swiftly for many days.

Vessels were spoken and islands sighted, but nothing worthy of note occurred until the afternoon of the ninth day.

They were now somewhere off the Lesser Antilles, when Barney noted a peculiar yellow line along the horizon.

He called Frank's attention to it.

"Begorra, I don't loike the looks av it," he declared.

"Nor I," said the young inventor, with alarm; "it is a hurricane coming."

"That is just what it is," declared Smythe.

Frank looked troubled.

The Search was built for a staunch seaworthy boat. Yet the young inventor did not desire to expose her to any unnecessary rough treatment.

"Golly! Wha' am we gwine to do, Marse Frank?" asked Pomp.

An idea occurred to the young inventor.

He knew that at a certain distance under the water the storm would be hardly felt.

"We will wait until it blows over!" he said.

Then the oncoming of the storm was watched. It was a grand sight. Far off on the horizon was a white sail. It was evident that the crew of the distant vessel were making every effort to get their vessel under bare poles.

The ship was watched with interest.

"I hope she will succeed," said Smythe, with alarm upon his face.

"If they do not, and the storm strikes them, they will go to the bottom."

"I fear the same," said Frank.

"We can do nothing to help them now."

"No."

Nearer drew the storm every moment.

With fearful thunder and bellow, it rushed down across the boiling sea like a messenger of death.

Frank waited as long as he dared, and then sent the Search below the surface.

Down for several hundred feet it sunk. The bottom was not reached, and the boat was held in suspension.

There was only a slight motion received from the effect of the storm above. When this had passed away, it was concluded that the storm was over.

Frank then sent the boat quickly to the surface.

The sun was shining brightly, and the sea was as calm as before the tempest.

Far to the eastward it could be seen still raging furiously.

Almost everybody at once thought of the ship.

All eyes were on the outlook for it, but it seemed to have disappeared.

Suddenly, however, Barney gave a cry of horror, and pointed to the south.

"Look!" he cried. "Be the sowl av Paddy the Piper, wud yez look!"

All did look. It was a dreadful spectacle which they beheld.

Not half a mile distant upon the rolling ocean was the ship they had seen bottom upward.

It had been turned completely over, and now floated a dismantled hulk.

"My God!" gasped Smythe. "What has become of the crew?"

But there was little need of asking this question.

That they had gone to the bottom it was safe enough to assume.

Yet, even as they looked, the submarine voyagers beheld a thrilling spectacle.

A mass of wreckage was floating beside the hulk, and upon this a single man was seen.

He was waving his arms wildly, and evidently trying to attract the attention of those on board the Search.

As Frank saw this, he shouted to Pomp in the pilot-house to bear down upon the wreck at once.

Pomp obeyed and the Search set out at full speed. Soon they neared the wreck.

Then the man's features as well as form became quite plain. He was seen to be an odd looking character.

He was plainly a type of old-fashioned Yankee farmer, with long hair, pointed beard and angular features.

He wore a swallowtail coat with cowhide boots and jeans pants, and a tall white hat with a bell crown.

He was of course soaked, having been long in the water, and how he came to preserve the hat so well, was a wonder.

The Search ran up alongside the wreckage and Frank shouted:

"Hello! What ship is that?"

"Hello!" replied the Yankee in a nasal manner, "by gosh t' Almighty, I'm durned glad ye've cum. I wudn't heve giv a copper cent fer my life half an hour ago!"

"What ship is that?" repeated Frank.

"Hey? What ship?" ejaculated the sole survivor. "I reckon she's ther Mischief from Boston fer Cape Horn. Thought I'd take a bit of v'yage in her, and by hemlock, I wisht I'd stayed tew hum with Sary Ann."

Everybody laughed at the quaintness of the other's speech.

"Well, I think we can get you off safely," said Frank. "Are you the sole survivor?"

"Durned if I kin say!" replied the Yankee, "but I don't see ennybody else jest naow."

"What is your name?"

"My name!" blurted the Yankee. "Air yew one of them census takers? By gosh 't all hemlock, I don't like 'em!"

"No, I'm not a census taker," replied Frank, with a laugh. "I'm the captain of this boat."

"Oh, yew air," said the Yankee, slowly. "Wall, you've got the funniest lookin' tub thar I ever seed. But thet's neither here nor thar. I'm Peleg Perkins, from Squashtown, New Jarsey. I was on my way tew pay a visit tew South America when this air condemned storm cum up."

"All right," cried Frank. "Stand by to come aboard, Mr. Perkins."

"Then yaw are goin' tew take me aboard, eh?"

"Yes."

"Durn myself, thet's the right kind of talk! I'll pay yew every gol durned cent of my passage back tew Squashtown."

"No, you won't," said Frank, with a laugh. "I am going in the opposite direction from Squashtown. Come aboard!"

A plank had been run out to the wreckage. Peleg crossed hastily. The moment he reached the deck he shook hands warmly with the others.

"Gol durned if I don't like tew meet gentlemen!" he declared, "and I should say thet yew air all sich."

"I hope so," replied Frank. "Now let us be off."

Further search of the wreckage was, on the whole, useless. There was no doubt but that Peleg was the sole survivor.

He told the story of the wreck.

The Mischief had been making fast time, under all sail, when the storm struck her.

Every effort was made to get her under bare poles.

But this was impossible. She was under fore and main topsails when the wind struck her full force.

Instantly she was pitched upon her beam ends, and filling, would have sunk at once but for her watertight compartments.

So far as Peleg knew, every member of the crew was drowned but himself.

"By pumpkins, I reckoned as haow I'd got my last sickness!" he declared; "but when I seen yure boat a-comin' I jest plucked up a bit, you bet! But what on airth kind of a craft do yew call this anyway?"

Peleg had been intently examining the submarine boat, and with the greatest of curiosity.

"This is a submarine boat," said Frank.

"A what?"

"A submarine boat!"

Peleg scratched his head.

"I don't jest know as heow I'm onto them new fangled terms," he declared. "What dew yew call a submareen boat, anyway?"

"Why it is built so that it can sail under or above water," said Frank.

"Under ther water?"

"Yes!"

Peleg looked skeptical.

It required actual demonstration to convince him. Then his keen Yankee mind began to size up the invention and he was mightily pleased.

"By gosh, yew air a cockalorum!" he said, patting Frank on the shoulder. "I am proud to know yew. Dang my doughnuts, but I'll travel with you up ther Amazon! pay my passage tew."

"We have not reckoned upon an extra passenger!" said Frank. "I am afraid we shall be compelled to decline your generous offer."

Peleg looked and evidently felt very bitterly disappointed.

CHAPTER IV.

UP THE TAPAJOS.

"By pollywags, I can't walk ashore!" he declared. "What kin I do?"

"Stay where you are for the present," said Frank. "I'll put you ashore at Georgetown, British Guiana, where you can get a vessel for any part of the world."

"An' mebbe git wrecked agin."

"You must take chances."

"By gosh! I'll work fer yew!" declared Peleg, pulling off his coat.

"I ain't ashamed tew dew that."

Frank hesitated.

A sudden thought crossed his mind. Really they were short handed, and an extra man would no doubt be needed in the swift current of the Amazon.

He liked the looks of Peleg.

It occurred to him that this man would be trusty and a good companion for Barney and Pomp.

"I will consider your offer!" said the young inventor, "in the meanwhile, make yourself easy."

The Search once more went on its way, leaving the wreck of the Mischief far behind.

For several days the submarine boat encountered no new incidents. Frank did not put in at Georgetown as he had intimated.

He had decided to keep Peleg aboard the Search.

The Yankee had become popular on board the submarine boat. He was genial, ready and willing, and possessed of all good traits.

He was delighted when Frank informed him of his decision.

"By gosh! I'll prove tew yew that I mean jest what I say!" he declared. "I'll stick by yew through thick an' thin."

They were now drawing near the mouth of the Amazon.

Cayenne was passed, and then the water began to have that peculiar hue, which always is found at the mouth of a great river.

The Amazon has no delta. Its wide mouth takes in the ocean for many miles, and the submarine boat was in the river almost before those on board knew it.

The course of the Search was set directly up the river.

There was nothing to stop for in the mighty bay so they kept on past the Marajo Island, and straight into the main current of the mighty stream.

When the mouth of the Xingu, a tributary river was reached, the river became narrower and the swell of the ocean disappeared.

The banks could now be seen on either side, and it was a picturesque sight.

The wildest and densest of tropical foliage was interspersed with clearings and plantations of rice and coffee, extending to the water's edge.

The journey now became an intensely interesting one.

Floating upon the mighty turbid current of the great river, the Search continued on its way for some days.

As yet they had not penetrated far enough up the stream to make it worth while to go beneath the surface.

But when the great bay at the mouth of the Tapajos river was reached, the Search was anchored.

Frank proposed to make an examination of the machinery and make sure that everything was in good condition for the great under-water trip to the mouth of the Ica river.

It would necessitate the work of several days to do this, so Prof. Smythe decided to take a trip up the Tapajos a short distance in a canoe.

His purpose was to collect botanical specimens and make a study of the fauna of the region.

Frank readily agreed to let Pomp and Peleg go with him.

Barney was to remain aboard the Search to assist Frank.

"Be careful that you do not get into trouble," cautioned Frank.

"The Tapajos country is fearful wild."

"I am aware of that," replied the professor; "but I intend to keep most of the time on the water, and only go ashore to camp at night."

"Very good! I wish you success."

"I thank you."

The canoe was an affair which the professor had designed especially for the style of expedition he was now undertaking.

It was of rubber, in various layers, with air-tight compartments. It could comfortably carry four persons.

Arms and ammunition and a camping outfit was stowed aboard.

Then the expedition set forth.

The Yankee, Peleg, was more than delighted with the opportunity of exploring the wilds. Like all of his countrymen, he was inordinately fond of wild adventure.

The Tapajos differs from the Amazon in the fact that it flows through a mountainous region free of savannahs and is broken into cataracts.

Its selvas were none the less dense though, and thickly peopled with animal and insect life.

Monkeys leaped from tree to tree and chattered defiantly at the explorers.

Striped jaguars slouched away into the dark depths, pumas lay sullenly upon overhanging branches of immense trees and birds of gorgeous plumage flew about.

It was a strange and fascinating scene.

To attempt to describe all the natural wonders of the region would require a volume.

The river bed was filled with heavy snags and roots of giant trees.

These were so concealed beneath the placid current that one had hard work to keep from running the canoe upon them.

Peleg was placed in the bow to look out for this, while Pomp and the professor paddled.

Up the river for miles they paddled on. Thus far the current had been sluggish.

But now a distant roar came plainly to their ears.

"The rapids!" declared Professor Smythe. "We shall have to carry if we go beyond them."

"Is that air ther verdict, doctor?" asked the Yankee of the professor.

Smythe shook his head.

"No," he replied, "I don't believe we will go beyond the base of the falls. We ought to secure specimens enough this side of there."

"I'm durned glad of that," declared Peleg. "I wudn't risk my life in them condemned woods."

"Golly!" declared Pomp, "some ob dem big snakes jes' eat a man up!"

The professor at this moment leaped up and began to paddle furiously, at the same time crying:

"Give us a hand quick, Pomp, or it'll be the end of us! My God! do you see that awful reptile?"

"Golly fo' glory!" yelled Pomp. "We am gwine to kingdom come!"

"Great hollylocks!" screamed the Yankee. "We're busted fer sure!"

Peleg picked up his rifle, and Pomp and the professor bent to the paddles.

The cause of their alarm was apparent and fully warrantable.

From a cave in the shore line a monster reptile had glided out.

It was a cross between a snake and a crocodile, and was a most hideous sight.

Its great jaws were wide open, and it was bearing down upon the canoe like an avalanche.

That the canoe was the object of its fury was certain.

The situation was truly a thrilling one. The peril in which the explorers were was most intense.

Peleg aimed at the reptile, and fired. If the bullet struck him he did not show any sign of it.

Prof. Smythe and Pomp were paddling fast for the shore. But they had yet some distance to go.

The unknown species of reptile was fully seventy feet long, with a huge body and glistening scales.

Its color was a dull green, with a yellowish belly. With head high erected it came down upon the boat.

Smythe saw at once that it was going to be impossible to reach the shore in time.

With this realization he did not wait longer, but dropping his paddle, picked up his rifle.

He aimed full at the monster's throat, and fired.

The reptile made a convulsive movement as if in pain. Then it started forward more speedily than ever.

Pomp reached out and clutched the end of a snag in the middle of the river.

"I'ee gwine to hold de boat stiddy, Marse Smythe!" he shouted.

"Jes' yo' gib it to dat chap wif all yo' might."

"Pollywogs an' grasshoppers!" yelled Peleg. "I kain't even hit the cuss!"

But now the water serpent was close upon the canoe.

It was now or never. Prof. Smythe held his Winchester steady and fired directly into the reptile's mouth.

There was an eerie hiss, an almost human-like cry from the reptile, and for a moment it was at a standstill.

But the next instant it reared higher in the air, and came down full force upon the canoe.

That blow was its death throe, but it was sufficient for the destruction of the canoe.

In an instant the three explorers were in the water, guns, stores and all. It was a thrilling moment.

All knew the horror of risking life in the waters of the Tapajos.

In its mud there were alligators of prodigious size which would not hesitate to drag them under at once.

They were fully fifty yards from the shore. The overturned canoe drifted beyond their reach down the stream.

With terrible fear all struck out at once for the shore.

There was not a moment of that terrible swim that each did not expect to feel the jaws of a river monster close upon his body.

But this did not happen.

For some strange reason they were not molested by the saurians. After a long, hard swim all crawled safely out upon the sands of the river bank.

There they lay in the bleaching sun, completely overcome.

It was some moments before any one of the party could speak; then Peleg blurted forth:

"By ther Jeems' rice, I thought I wuz goin' to be eat up sure! Kin yew tell why we wasn't?"

"Golly, I jes' specs dem 'gators didn't see us," averred Pomp.

"We are certainly fortunate," said Prof. Smythe. "But what better is our position now? We are in a bad fix."

This was true enough.

All their means of defense were at the bottom of the river.

They had not a weapon of any kind. All were wet to the skin as well.

The submarine boat was many miles below them. To attempt to reach it by journeying along the shore seemed impossible.

The situation was appalling.

Smythe was a plucky man, but now his face was ashen pale as he gazed at his companions, and said:

"I fear we are lost!"

Indeed the perils which now surrounded them were certainly of terrible sort. Jaguars and pumas swarmed in the forest.

The river was filled with deadly reptiles. Just how to get back to their friends was no easy problem.

"Wha' am we gwine to do?" asked Pomp, in an uncertain voice.

Before an answer could be made, a thrilling thing occurred.

Suddenly, around a headland in the river, there shot a long canoe, in which were a dozen native Indians.

They were fancifully decorated, but mostly naked, and carried primitive weapons. It was a thrilling moment.

CHAPTER V.

TO THE RESCUE.

FRANK and Barney left aboard the submarine boat worked steadily for hours. There was much to be done.

The young inventor was thoroughly overhauling the electrical machinery and every part of the boat.

No thought was given to aught else so they were not apprised of any impending danger until later in the day.

Barney was in the pilot-house scouring up some brass work, when he felt a slight shock as if something had touched the boat.

It might have been a drifting snag or log and the Celt for a moment was not disposed to heed it.

But some motive or presentiment caused him to step to the window of the pilot-house and look out.

An astounding sight rewarded his gaze as he did so.

There by the side of the Search was a long canoe literally packed with South American natives who were in the act of just clambering aboard.

Other canoes were hastily coming down the river current.

Barney waited for no more.

He let out a yell which might have awakened the dead.

"Misther Frank! Murtha—murtha! Shure it's attacked we are!"

Frank heard the call.

He instantly came tumbling out of the engine room, where he had been busily at work on the machinery.

He took in the situation at a glance.

Frank was quick to act.

He sprang into the pilot-house with Barney and threw open the motor lever. Instantly the boat shot forward.

The canoe was overturned and the others left astern quickly.

But there were fully a half score of the savages on the deck of the Search. These with wild cries now came rushing toward the pilot-house.

That they meant to loot the boat if possible was certain. Frank caught up a Winchester and shouted to Barney: "Press lever Number Four—quick! Then give it to 'em!" Lever Number Four hermetically sealed every door and window aboard the Search.

Then Frank fired point blank at the black rascals. One of them dropped.

Then the young inventor sprang to the keyboard and pressed the tank valve. Instantly the boat sank.

The Indians were left floating in the water above. As the Search went down to the bed of the river, hungry alligators were seen rushing to the surface.

"Bejabers, there's a foine meal for thim up there," cried Barney. "Shure, I hope they'll enjoy it."

That every one of the unlucky foe became food for the saurians was almost a certainty.

The bed of the river here was slime and ooze, and Frank did not dare to let the weight of the Search rest upon it.

After a time he sent the boat to the surface again.

It came up not far from the spot where the unfortunate natives had met their fate.

The canoes were now a mile distant and making for the shore. They did not return to the attack. The strange evolutions of the Search had no doubt terrified them.

"Begorra, they tuk their walking tickets aisy enough," declared Barney. "Divil a bit they'll thrubble us agin."

"I believe you're right, Barney!"

"Shure, sor, an' I'm affther thinkin' av the others. Phwat if they should come acrost thim rapsallions!"

This was a startling thought.

But Frank shrugged his shoulders and said:

"I think they will not be apt to. They have gone in an opposite direction. Moreover they are well armed!"

Barney said no more but went about his duties. It was near evening when finally Frank came out upon deck and looked up the mouth of the Tapajos.

"It is full time that they should return," he thought, "that is unless they mean to camp over night."

As there were no signs of them visible, Frank concluded that this course had been decided upon by the professor.

Barney had been on the lookout for the explorers himself, and now approaching Frank ventured to say:

"Shure, sor, it's very quare phweriver they are."

"Indeed it is!" agreed Frank.

"Mebbe they've cum to harrum!"

"Oh, I think not!" said Frank, "there is I think little likelihood of that. They have perhaps camped somewhere for the night. The professor is an ardent naturalist!"

Barney looked doubtful and once more swept the turbid current with his gaze.

As he did so he indulged in a wild and startled cry.

"Shure, sor, phwativer is that? Kin yez not see?"

Frank could see and right well too.

The object in question floated upon the turgid tide of the river not one hundred yards away.

At first one might mistake it for one of the drifting snags which obstructed the river's course.

But a closer look revealed it as a canoe overturned. That it was not one of the native craft was also apparent.

"An overturned canoe!" cried Frank. "My God! it is the same one they took with them!"

The young inventor's face became chalk white and he gazed at the canoe with dilated eyeballs.

Barney crossed himself and groaned.

"Mither av Mary! It's kilt intoirely they all are."

In that moment, Frank gave up all hope that Smythe and his companions had escaped death.

It seemed impossible that they should be dumped into the waters of the terrible river and escape alive.

Frank sprang into the pilot-house.

"Take a boat-hook and draw the canoe alongside, Barney!" he commanded.

Then he started the Search forward. Barney stood by the rail with the hook, and as the canoe came alongside he hooked it and drew it aboard.

It was stove and badly battered. Blood was upon the thwarts, which had come from the dead serpent.

The contents of the light craft were, of course, at the bottom of the river.

Frank groaned as he inspected the canoe.

The blood of course he reckoned as that of one of the occupants.

Some monster alligator had no doubt pounced upon and wounded one of them, and this explained the presence of the red fluid.

"My soul! I fear they are all dead."

"Begorra, perhaps some wan av thim got ashore, maybe the naygur," said Barney with conviction.

This was true enough.

Frank recognized the logic of the declaration, and said:

"We will at once proceed to find out."

He accordingly started the Search up the waters of the Tapajos. He started the engines at full speed.

For miles the submarine boat kept on at this rate.

But there was danger of colliding with snags in the river, and it was also fast growing dark.

Barney was forward in the bow keeping a good lookout for snags.

Suddenly the Celt shouted:

"Be me sowl, I belave that's wan av the riptiles as tackled thim!"

Floating upon the turbid tide was an immense water python, full sixty or seventy feet long.

Its head seemed riddled with bullet holes. No doubt it had been shot by the explorers.

Frank watched the monster's body drift by. Then he allowed the Search to run nearer the shore.

As he did so Barney heard a shout. It was a cry of distress.

Glancing toward the shore the Celt beheld a thrilling sight. He gave a gasp of horror and shouted to Frank:

"Mither av Mary! Wud yez luk over there, sor! Phwat is it?"

Frank looked in the direction indicated, and his face froze with horror.

There upon the river bank in the twilight he saw a host of dusky forms.

A fire burned upon the sands, and several canoes were drawn high up.

All this he saw, but something else claimed his attention.

Upon the bank were three stakes driven into the ground, and to these were bound three men.

Frank needed no second glance to recognize them.

They were Smythe, Pomp and Peleg.

They had been surrounded by the Indians and captured after a thrilling fight.

The savages had prepared a dreadful ordeal of torture for them.

But just at the last moment the Search had suddenly hove into view.

Pomp saw it first and yelled:

"Ki yi! Dar dey am, frien's! Dey hab cum to sabe us, bless de Lor!"

"The Search!" gasped Smythe.

"Hemlock an' hick'ries!" sputtered Peleg, "that's in our favor. We'll cum ther whip hand on 'em yet!"

The Indians had seen the Search almost at the same moment.

The effect upon them was a most singular one.

At once they seemed to wax excited and to for the time forget their prisoners. They brandished their weapons and rushed down to the water's edge.

This was fortunate for the prisoners.

It was evident that they meant to try and capture the submarine boat if possible. That this was impossible did not once occur to them.

Frank and Barney on board the Search took in the situation readily. It seemed that the three explorers, Smythe, Pomp and Peleg, had been so unfortunate as to fall into the hands of the Indians after being so unceremoniously dumped out of their canoe.

We left them at the close of a preceding chapter on the bank of the river, just as a canoe load of the Indians came around the bend.

They were seen at once, and started to retreat into the forest.

However, the selvas here were almost impenetrable, and before they could get any distance, the savages had outstripped them.

Being without weapons they could do little to defend themselves, and were quickly made prisoners.

Thus we find them just upon the eve of torture. The Search had appeared in the nick of time.

"Be jabers! phwat shall we do, Mither Frank?" cried Barney.

"Close all the doors and windows," ordered Frank. "I think we can save the lives of our friends."

Barney pressed the lever which sealed the boat and also set the oxygen generator at work.

Then Frank allowed the Search to sail nearer to the shore.

This was apparently just what the natives wanted for in a body they pressed out into the river and some approached the submarine boat in their canoes.

It was evident that they meant to attack the Search.

Frank Reade, Jr., smiled as he thought how easy it would be for him to dupe them.

CHAPTER VI.

BATTLE WITH A SERPENT.

FRANK allowed the Search to drift nearer the shore.

Some of the natives were now able to scramble aboard. Numbers of them came piling over the rail.

They at once made an attack upon the windows and doors.

But these were all so protected that they could do no harm, and Frank allowed a large number of them to get aboard.

Then suddenly he sent the boat out into the current.

Down opposite the mouth of a mighty lagoon the Search floated.

Here were scores, ay, hundreds of alligators, basking in the declining light of the sun.

Frank now suddenly opened the tank valve. Instantly the submarine boat went down.

The occupants of the deck, full half a hundred in number, went into the water in awful terror.

It was a terrible trap, and they had become easy victims.

Never had the alligators or crocodiles of the lagoon had such a feast before. The water suddenly became alive with the ravenous creatures.

Indians were snapped under the surface, the water swam with blood, and the air was hideous with awful cries.

But not for long.

The bellowing of the saurians soon drowned these. Many of the poor wretches tried to make the shore.

But there were at least three alligators to each victim, and not one lived to get out of that terrible death pool.

The Search came to the surface a hundred yards distant.

It was a fearful sight which Frank and Barney had the opportunity of witnessing.

But the young inventor could not bear it.

He turned away with a shiver.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed; "that goes against my grain. I would not have done it if I had known of any other way to save our friends." This was true.

Frank was always averse to the wholesale taking of life.

If possible he would always refrain from warfare of any kind. Yet in a case of necessity he would fight to the death.

The scene in the lagoon, however, quickly terminated.

Soon silence once more reigned over the place; the tragedy was done.

The Search now turned toward the spot on the river bank where were the three prisoners.

They were yet there and unharmed.

A canoe load of terrified natives was making rapid way down the current. But Frank saw one yet left on the shore.

He saw this one suddenly flourish a battle club and rush toward the prisoners.

It was doubtless his intention to kill them. For a moment Frank was appalled.

Then he acted.

Quick as a flash he threw open the pilot-house window and raised his rifle.

Crack!

The bullet sped true to the mark. The wretch fell dead and the prisoners were saved.

Frank now sent the Search close to the shore.

The water was deep and it was possible to get so close that Barney was able to seize an overhanging branch and swing himself ashore.

With a knife in his teeth he rushed up the bank.

It was but a moment's work to cut the bonds of the prisoners. Then a joyful reunion followed.

An interchange of experiences ensued and Frank listened with interest to the story of the prisoners.

"We have these Indians to fear," he said, "and they are a villainous lot. We shall find no friendly natives above the mouth of the Tapajos."

All now went aboard the Search.

As there was no reason for lingering longer in the vicinity, Frank started the Search back down the stream.

As it was now rapidly getting dark he pressed the lever of the searchlight and made a pathway down the river as bright as day.

By this light they were easily able to locate the snags and obstructions.

In fact it was almost as easy as in daylight, and soon without serious incident the Amazon was reached.

Again they were anchored in the same spot. As all were much fatigued, they retired to rest.

Two days later Frank concluded that he had effected sufficient repairs upon the machinery to allow of making the under water start.

This was made in the early morning hour, and sending the boat down to within ten feet of the bottom, Frank started her upon the long under water trip.

She forged ahead at a fair rate of speed.

The search-light made a path of radiance ahead for fully a quarter of a mile.

This made all objects as plain as could be, and many strange forms of animal life were seen.

There were legions of alligators and water serpents.

Huge tortoises and a strange creature resembling an octopus but called by the natives a water spider.

Everywhere the bed of the Amazon seemed that same filthy mass of slime and mire.

There were few places where it was safe to allow the boat to rest upon terra firma.

All manner of curious aquatic plants lived in the slimy depths. In these were strange fishes and reptiles.

In fact, the Amazon was found to contain forms of animal and vegetable life such as the naturalist and scientist had never dreamed of.

Of course it was a rich field for Prof. Smythe.

The savant availed himself of every opportunity to pursue his studies, and he was successful in the extreme.

The progress of the Search was necessarily slow.

Days passed and the submarine boat still crept on under the dark depths of the Amazon.

Of course every day brought them so much nearer the Ica rapids, where the bag of diamonds was lost.

But the incidents which daily occurred were so many and varied that they would fill many volumes.

One day the Search reached a point in the river where huge bowlders seemed to rise and form a narrow channel or pass in the bed of the river.

The water ran through this quite fast.

Into it Frank ran the submarine boat without a thought of danger. Suddenly there was a jar and a shock, and Barney shouted from the pilot-house:

"Shure, Misther Frank, the devil has got the boat. Come, quick!"

Frank flashed the search-light ahead into the passage. He saw what was the trouble at once.

About the ram of the boat there was literally wound in folds a monster serpent.

Its coils were so closely drawn about the vessel's bow and its weight was so great, that progress was for a time impeded.

Frank saw the danger of being tossed against the bowlders by the current.

The serpent must be disposed of at once. He acted quickly.

Picking up a wire he hastily connected it with the electric dynamos. Then with insulated gloves he carried it forward to the forward hold.

Frank crept into a small aperture which led to the very junction of the steel ram with the boat.

He affixed the wire against this steel surface in such a way that a circuit was formed. Then he turned on the current full force.

He could not see the effect from where he was.

But the others in the pilot house saw it with wonderment.

The water literally boiled as the huge serpent writhed and twisted. It struck terrific blows against the steel hull.

But the repeated shocks completely stunned and killed it, and relaxing its hold, it dropped from the ram.

The boat shot forward, passing over the water python's body. A few seconds more and it was in the upper river.

This was only one of the hundreds of like incidents which happened almost every hour.

Every form of monster life in the great river was possessed of a desire to be aggressive.

Alligators of enormous size attacked the boat savagely, but always with serious results to themselves.

But after a few hundred miles of travel in this fashion, the bed of the river suddenly changed.

The mud and slime and ooze were exchanged for clear ground and white sand, and the waters of the river were quicker.

This was more like it, and all were glad to hail the change.

Pomp was on watch one day when he descried a dark object at his right through the dim water.

At first he had reckoned it a stump or bowlder, but as some motive led him to study it more closely, he gave a sharp cry of surprise.

"Golly massy!" he gasped, "wha' am dat? It lukes to me jes' per-zactly like a boat dat was sunk!"

His cry had attracted the attention of Frank Reade, Jr.

The young inventor sprang into the pilot-house and exclaimed:

"What is the matter, Pomp?"

"Massy sakes, Marse Frank, don' dat jes' look like a sunken boat?"

Pomp pointed to the object.

Frank gave a violent start.

He sprang to the rudder lever and turned the boat toward the strange object.

A moment later it was seen to be really a sunken boat.

As near as could be seen it was a small steamer. It lay easy upon its side in two hundred feet of water.

Of course it could not be the craft which had on board the sunken diamonds, for that was many hundred miles above this point.

But Frank was interested nevertheless to know the name and character of the sunken boat.

The Search settled down upon the sandy bottom not far from the wreck.

"How will you go aboard of her, Frank?" asked Smythe.

"That is easy enough," replied the young inventor.

He went into the forward cabin and came back with a diving suit, an air pump, and several hundred feet of life line.

He gave directions to Barney and Pomp and then donned the diving suit.

In vain the others begged leave to accompany him.

The young inventor refused, for he was determined to visit the wreck alone.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SUNKEN YACHT.

THE diving-suit worn by Frank was quite a wonderful affair.

It was an invention of his own and much unlike the regular suit.

The helmet was made to turn upon a hinge or slide and had windows in all directions.

In the breast there was a circular window of plate glass and back of it was set a powerful electric light operated by a storage battery.

This lit up the bed of the river before him and was of incalculable value on that score.

In his belt Frank carried a heavy ax and in his hands a long, keen bladed pike.

This was to use as a weapon of defense in case he was attacked by any reptile or under-water foe.

The method of leaving the submarine boat while under water was a clever and ingenious one.

A vestibule led from the main cabin with a door which was hermetically bound.

After the diver had passed into this, he simply closed the door behind him, the life hose being carried through an orifice in the door.

Then turning a valve the vestibule filled with water. When this was done, the diver simply opened the door and walked out where he chose, drawing the life line after him.

When he should get ready to return, the vestibule was closed and the water ejected by means of compressed air. Then the diver was free to remove his suit and enter the cabin.

Nothing was seen of any saurians or other reptiles in the vicinity. But this was no evidence that they might not at any moment turn up, so Frank was prepared.

He left the Search and stood upon the river bed.

Those on board the submarine boat were crowded at the plate glass windows, watching him with interest.

Frank walked firmly and evenly toward the sunken steamer.

As he drew nearer, he saw that it was heavily covered with silt and slime. He could not distinguish the name upon the bow.

But he could see easily enough that it was a trim built craft, a sort of steam pleasure yacht.

That such a craft should be found in this part of the world was certainly an astonishing thing.

But Frank did not waste time in cogitating over this. He approached the hull, and looked for a chance to clamber aboard.

But the boat was heavily listed the other way. Frank decided that it would be easier to get aboard from the other side.

So he at once started around the stern of the craft.

He carefully drew the life line after him. This put the sunken yacht between him and the Search.

Frank made his way along the sandy bottom of the river, and began to look for a good spot to clamber aboard the wreck.

But before he could do this an astounding thing happened.

For a moment it literally froze the blood in his veins.

Suddenly from the black waters beyond in the direction of the reedy shore he saw dark forms materialize.

They were gigantic in size, and one of them much nearer than the others, Frank saw was a monster alligator.

He had never seen so large a one in his life.

It seemed fully thirty feet in length and had horrible jaws capable of taking him in bodily.

The monster came toward him with serpent-like movement. Its massive jaws opened not a foot from Frank's head before he recovered sufficiently to act.

Then quick as a flash he whirled the keen bladed pike high over his head and taking cool aim drope it full force down the monster's throat. There was a convulsive shock, the alligator recoiled and blood filled the water.

The monster wounded to death, writhed backwards. But close behind him was another.

Frank knew that there might be a score or more of the saurians in the vicinity and it was folly for him to hope to cope successfully with them all.

So he did not wait to meet the attack of the second alligator, but clambered quickly aboard the yacht.

He drew up as much of the life line as he thought he would need, and then crossed the deck to the rotting companion way.

By the light of his electric lantern he could see that it was safe for him to descend, and he did so.

The electric light made all in the cavern as plain as day.

A thrilling scene it was which was presented to the young inventor.

At the cabin table sat a man, now nothing but a moldering skeleton.

His head rested upon the table as if he had been asleep when death overtook him.

Upon the cabin floor were four other skeletons, two men and two women.

Frank could not help but wonder what was the meaning of their presence here in this out of the way part of the world.

"Probably explorers," he thought. "They met a terrible fate."

Frank made a cursory examination of the cabin, but found nothing of value save a tin box upon the table which seemed water tight and contained something heavy.

"Doubtless there is something valuable in that," thought Frank. "I will take it along with me."

Placing the box under his arm he began to climb the cabin stairs. He saw no reason for remaining longer in the place. His intention was to return at once to the Search.

But just as his head appeared above the level of the deck, that moment came near being his last.

There was a ringing snap and heavy jaws nearly closed over his head.

A huge alligator had been waiting there for him to show himself. Frank was nonplused.

There were the reptile's jaws ready to nip him when he should emerge. How could he evade them?

He knew that the alligator would wait there an indefinite length of time for him to come out.

The young inventor was anxious to return at once to the submarine boat. He was not long without a resolve however.

His position was not an easy one from which to reach his foe.

But he was not slow in hitting upon a device.

Waiting a favorable moment, he raised himself above the level of the deck.

The monster's jaws flew open.

Forward flew the sharp-bladed pike in Frank's hands.

It went through the alligator's throat to its intestines, and instantly killed it.

It required some exertion upon Frank's part to withdraw the pike; but he finally succeeded, and then crawled out upon deck.

No other monster foes seemed in the vicinity, and Frank slid down from the yacht's deck.

A moment later the electric lights of the Search were upon him, and he was hastily crossing the intervening space to the boat.

Barney and Pomp were at work at the air pump. Prof. Smythe and Peleg saw Frank coming, and shouted joyfully to this effect:

"He has got a big box under his arm!" cried Prof. Smythe. "Perhaps it is the lost treasure."

"By gosh! I reckon I'd rather be hyar than outen thar in thet air pesky river!" declared Peleg, sententiously. "Thar's tew many alligators and snakes fer me!"

Frank reached the vestibule safely, and a few moments later was out of his diving suit and safely on board the Search.

He quickly recounted his experiences to the interest and wonderment of the others.

"B'gosh, I knew ye'd hit onto one of them 'gol-durned alligators afore ye got back!" declared Peleg. "Homsumdever, I'm pesky glad it didn't chaw ye up!"

"So say we all of us," said Smythe.

"Golly, Marse Frank, yo' oughter had dis chile wif yo' to help yo'," declared Pomp.

"I think I did the wisest thing in going alone," said Frank. "If there had been two, one of us would certainly have been killed."

"Bejabers, an' is it the diamonds yez are afther carryin' around in thet box?" asked Barney.

Frank laughed.

"I think not," he said, "but then I don't exactly know what the box does contain. Let us open it?"

The box was placed upon the table, and now it was seen to be fastened with a small padlock.

As luck had it, Peleg was a crack lock picker, and after a few moments' work with a bent wire, had the lock open.

Then Frank raised the lid.

The watchers had half expected to see gold, silver or diamonds. To the amazement of all it contained only a heavy book.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Smythe in disgust, "that is a fraud."

"Golly, but amn't we sold!" grinned Pomp.

"Bejabers, it loks loike a Bible!" said Barney. "It's good care they give it to be shure."

Peleg was silent.

But Frank said, as he read an inscription upon the cover of the volume:

"This book is of more value than you can imagine. It is the log of the yacht Mist, Captain Varley Varien, of New York City."

"A log book!" exclaimed Prof. Smythe; "then it will tell the story of the yacht."

"Exactly!"

"That will certainly be of interest. Let us read it."

Frank opened the pages and read as the first inscription or entry:

"NEW YORK CITY, May 25th, 18—.

"Sailed to-day in the Mist Captain Varley Varien, his son Paul, his two daughters Louise and Elsie, Roger Vane and Lieut. Copley Hall. Also six able seamen as follows:

"John Bunce,	Albert Hill,	Ned Nevins,
Mart True,	Jim Clancy,	Luigi Delaine.

"Bound for the navigable waters of the Amazon on a tour of exploration. Weather fair, wind west by south, barometer steady and clear, thermometer 82 deg. Fahrenheit. Cleared Sandy Hook at 4:40 P. M."

Then followed daily record of the voyage to the mouth of the Amazon.

As this was mostly verbose and devoid of incident, Frank passed on to the final page.

He read the entry through without pausing. Then he lifted his head and regarded his companions with white face.

"Oh, this is horrible!" he exclaimed; "this last page tells the whole story of their awful fate!"

Then he read it aloud.

CHAPTER VIII.

POMP IS VICTIMIZED.

THE last page of the log of the Mist read as follows:

"This is the eighth day of the terrible fever which has stricken our crew. I, Paul Varien, am the only one of the crew left without the fever.

"What is worse, a leak has sprung in the yacht's hull and I see no way to get her ashore, for at this point there are terrible morasses intervening many miles and impassable.

"I have worked at the pumps all the morning and am completely exhausted. There is no one to help me.

"Unless I get help soon or the water ceases coming into the hold, the yacht must sink and we shall all be buried under the Amazon.

"Hark! what is that I hear? A gurgling terrible sound. Great God! I believe the timbers are parting, I can write no more for I feel that we are doomed. I must learn the truth."

Here the record broke off. But this last entry was sufficient and told all that was necessary.

As Frank ceased reading, silence reigned for some moments.

All were horrified with this account of the dreadful fate of the Mist and her party. Swept from the face of the earth, their fate might never have been known, but for the visit of the Search.

"That is a dreadful account of a tragedy!" declared Smythe, with a shiver. "I am sorry for the poor souls!"

"Bogorra, they oughtn't to have been so risky!" ventured Barney.

"Thet's all right fer yew tew say!" declared Peleg, "but what dew yew think of us?"

"True!" rejoined Frank, "it is possible that we may meet with the same fate, and like them be forever buried under the Amazon."

"But we will not accept so dismal a view of the future," declared the professor. "Let us get away from here!"

All were not sorry to do this.

There seemed something weird and ghastly about the spot. To get away was a great relief.

So they left the wreck far behind, but Frank kept the log-book.

"It will be of value when I get home," he declared, "there are plenty of friends of these people who will doubtless want to know their fate."

The Search now went on slowly up the stream.

Barney and Pomp thus far during the voyage had been faithful in their duties, and had abstained much from their propensity for practical jokes.

This had pleased Frank, who congratulated himself upon their having turned over a new leaf.

But in this conclusion he was premature.

The submarine boat was well stocked with provisions of the ordinary kind.

But as none in the party had tasted fresh meat in many days. Frank concluded to vary the diet.

He decided to tie up by the shore in some favorable locality and organize a hunt.

He conveyed this idea to the others and it met with hearty acceptance.

All were ready for it and at once preparations were made.

The Search went to the surface and it was found that they were between high wooded banks where the ground was higher and the forest thinner.

This was more conducive to hunting successfully and at once the Search was drawn up and anchored close to the shore.

The river here seemed remarkably free from reptiles, and there was a clear sandy beach upon which to land.

The hunting party was quickly made up.

Peleg and the professor decided to remain on board the boat.

This left Frank Reade, Jr., and Barney and Pomp to dare the perils of the South American wilds.

They were not at all disappointed and Pomp even ventured to say: "I've done glad dem gemmens gwine to stay to home. Dey would never be able fo' to shoot anything nohow."

"Begorra, I'm not so sure about yerself, naygur," said Barney.

"Am dat any insinuation on mah skill as a hunter, sah?" sniffed Pomp.

"Be me sowl there's no need for to insinuate, sor, not a bit. I'll lay me loife yez couldn't hit a wood deer at ten yards!"

"Huh! yo' am berry sakastical, I'ish. I fink yo' cudn't hit yo'self if yo' was to try fo' a hundred years!"

"Don't yez thry to be funny!"

"Yo' am de one jes' tryin' dat."

"Begorra, I'll lay fer yez, naygur!"

"Yo'll be laid out if yo' does. Mark my wo'd fo' dat, sah."

So the two jokers went ashore with a secret purpose to get hunk with each other.

How they succeeded we shall see in due course.

Frank equipped himself well for the hunt.

He knew well that one might expect big game in those wilds.

He provided himself with a rifle which threw a small explosive shell capable of doing great damage.

It was his hopes to run across wood deer, a species of which were common in those parts.

Their flesh was very nutritious and palatable, but they were exceedingly shy and difficult to bag.

Reaching the shore, Frank plunged into the deep forest. Barney and Pomp were behind him.

Plenty of pheasants and other game birds flew across their path, but it was not these that Frank was in quest of.

So he did not waste his ammunition upon them.

But coming suddenly into a clearing, a herd of the beautiful little deer were scared up from a jungle.

They were away like arrows, but Frank knew they would not go far. He was determined to bag one or more of them.

So he said:

"Barney and Pomp, you go down through the run yonder and start them up this way. Shoot if you can get a good line on them."

"All roight, sor!" cried Barney.

And away the two jokers scampered. Frank now took a detour so as to catch the deer at the outlet of their run-way.

Barney and Pomp for awhile kept on through the run.

They came upon the deer and started them, but failed to get a shot. Then they tried still hunting.

But in this they were not successful. Finally they concluded to wait the return of Frank Reade, Jr., who was lying in ambush for the deer.

Barney however, had not been idle all the while.

In pushing through the bushes he had come upon a tremendous hornet's nest of a species peculiar to the tropics.

They were of a species which would not sting unless roughly handled. Barney knew this full well.

He decided upon a daring trick.

"Begorra, I'll spring it upon the naygur this toime," he muttered. "Shure, he'll think the devil has got him."

He detached the nest at a favorable moment and handling it gingerly placed it at the foot of a small banyon tree and covered it up with leaves.

The hornets swarmed all about him while he was doing it, but went into the nest when Barney put it down.

The Celt chuckling sat down at a point near by and drew a black flask from his pocket.

"Here's to success!" he said, tipping it up and taking a draught of its contents.

Pomp had been nosing around through the bushes near and chanced to see Barney imbibing the "rale stuff."

Now the darky had a sweet tooth as well as Barney, and his mouth watered as he observed the Celt.

The bait took and Barney chuckled as he saw his victim coming.

"How are yez, naygur?" he called. "Are yez a bit dhry?"

"Yo' am a mind-reader I jes' beliebe, I'ish!" declared Pomp. "'Specs' I am jes' about as dry as a salt fish."

"Begorra, put your snout onto this an' thin tell me phwat yez think of it."

Pomp took the flask and would have drained it, but Barney cried:

"Have done wid yez. Shure it's all we have in case av snake bites."

"Huh! dat am berry good stuff," rejoined Pomp, smacking his lips.

"Begorra, there's no better. I am afraid we'll not have the best av luck an this hunt, naygur!"

"Yo' am right dar. Dis chile am so dog tired dat he kain't hardly keep hisself from falling down."

"Be me sowl, there's a good sate over yender. Will yez take it an' we'll spind a few moments at our aise."

Pomp bit easily. The seat indicated by Barney was an inviting one. He did not hesitate to take it.

He sat down upon what he believed to be a small green banking at the foot of the tree.

But he was speedily undeceived.

As he put his weight upon the green mass it gave way, and he went crashing down through the hornets' hive.

It flattened that affair out like a paper hat, but Pomp was for a moment too astonished to rise.

"Golly fo' glory!" he gasped. "Who ebber fought dat wouldn't hold mah weight? Eh! Ugh! Ow! Ouch!"

He saw Barney rise and dust to a safe distance, and he experienced a hundred needle like pains before he realized the situation.

The hornets objected to this sort of treatment, as they had a moral right to, and began to get in their work in deadly earnest.

"Murder! Help! I'm killed! Gib dis chile help!" yelled Pomp, wildly.

As he crawled out of the wreck part of the nest clung to him.

A million of the maddened hornets were all about him, and giving him the most awful kind of a dose.

The darky bolted into the forest yelling like a madman.

Indeed, the situation might have become extremely serious, but for an incident.

These Brazilian hornets were of a large species, and there was a certain amount of poison in their sting.

It might have settled Pomp for a certainty, as the insects swarmed upon him.

But as good luck had it, the negro had rushed toward the river. He reached it, and plunged into the water.

It was lucky for him again that no alligators were about.

The water, of course, rid him of the stinging pests. He arose after a long dive, and swam for the Search.

He clambered aboard, and his appearance was startling. His head and face were swollen beyond recognition.

Indeed, Barney repented his joke when he saw his companion, and at once began applying cooling lotions to help him get rid of the pain.

Pomp never suspected Barney, and the Celt felt that for once he had got the best of his friend and colleague.

CHAPTER IX.

SEARCHING FOR THE WRECK.

BUT a short while after Barney and Pomp returned Frank appeared on the banks with a wood-deer over his shoulders.

It was a beautiful little creature and furnished the juiciest of meat.

He had not captured it without some thrilling experiences.

After sending Barney and Pomp down through the run to drive up the deer, Frank had made a detour through the woods to get in their path if possible.

The South American forest was a wonderful depth of tangled foliage and giant trees.

The tops of these met far overhead so densely that in most parts the light of the sun was shut out entirely.

At every step new wonders were revealed.

Chattering monkeys leaped from limb to limb and filled the air with their incessant din.

Rabbits, squirrels, ground hogs and peccaries scampered into the undergrowth upon all hands.

Everywhere animal life was present in some form or other. Game of the smaller variety was plentiful.

But Frank was after larger game.

He pushed on for some ways through the forest when suddenly he heard a peculiar startled cry at his right.

Turning his head he glanced down a narrow vista and saw in the distance a thrilling sight.

The cry had been almost mortal in its intensity and force.

Dangling from the heavy limb of a massive tree was a monster python and in its coils was a victim.

Breath and life were being pressed out of the victim by the powerful folds. It was a fearful sight.

What was more Frank saw that the victim was a human being.

It was one of the Brazilian natives half naked and vainly struggling in an attempt to lance its deadly foe.

But the python had the mastery and its great head was reared aloft to strike the unfortunate man.

All this Frank saw.

He was overwhelmed with horror. What was to be done? There was no time to lose.

Quick as a flash he acted.

What mattered it though the unfortunate wretch was an Indian and a savage foe?

He was a human being, and this was enough for Frank.

Quick as a flash he drew aim with his rifle. It was a long shot and the light was bad.

But as luck had it, the aim was accurate. The bullet struck the serpent's head and crushed it.

The big folds relaxed, the native tumbled half senseless upon the ground, while the serpent rolled writhing in death throes away.

Frank quickly reached the spot.

The native had scrambled to his feet. But at sight of Frank his terror was scarcely lessened.

He would have fled but that he did not have the strength. However, Frank made reassuring signs.

Then he addressed the fellow, but he evidently did not understand English. Next Frank tried Spanish.

But the fellow replied in his native tongue which was unintelligible.

Frank saw at once that nothing was to be gained in this manner.

As he had no further interest in the native, he made friendly signs and gave him a small match case which he had in his pocket as a token of amity.

The fellow groveled at his feet in gratitude, and then limped away and disappeared in the forest.

Frank was not certain what would be the result of this stroke of diplomacy as he believed this would prove to be.

"If it succeeds in establishing good terms between us and the natives," he thought, "that will be well."

He went on now in quest of the deer, and had not proceeded half a mile further when he ran plump into a herd of them.

Frank had had time to fire once and bring down one before they were out of range.

It was a beauty, and satisfied with the result of the hunt, he placed it over his shoulder and started on the return to the boat.

The rich meat of the deer furnished a change in diet, and after Barney had prepared a good meal, Pomp being on the sick list, the Search and party were ready to proceed on the up-river cruise.

Drifting into the middle of the river, Frank once more sent the craft to the bottom.

Up the Amazon the Search went once more. Every day now was lessening the distance to the Ica rapids.

Prof. Smythe was constantly on the lookout for specimens, and one day, as the boat was passing through a dense growth of some curious sort of water plant, he gave a cry.

"Hold up, Frank!" he shouted. "Stop the engines, will you?"

Frank at once complied, and the professor rushed into the pilot-house.

"Look yonder!" he cried. "Do you see that peculiar specimen of a tortoise? It is of a rare and almost unknown species. I must have its shell."

The tortoise in question was certainly a remarkable specimen of its kind.

Its shell was built up in lateral ridges, with corrugated shades of gold and green. It was beautiful beyond all description.

Frank was at once also interested to secure the creature as a specimen, and cried to Barney:

"Bring out the diving suits lively. I want you to go with me."

"I hope you can succeed in capturing him, Frank," said the professor.

"Leave it to me," said Frank; "he shall not escape."

At once the diving suits were donned and lines were prepared. Then Frank and Barney left the boat.

The tortoise was in size fully three feet square and consequently quite a heavy load to handle.

Frank's idea was to get a line about the creature's leg or head and then dispatch it easily.

The tortoise was, in his native element, dangerous, for he had a sharp beak and could inflict a dangerous wound.

Therefore great care had to be employed in approaching him.

It was planned that Barney should occupy the creature's attention in front while Frank crept up behind.

This plan worked admirably.

The tortoise did not see the approach of its foes.

While Barney tantalized it, Frank crept cautiously up behind the creature and with a dexterous move slipped a noose about the creature's leg.

He drew it tight. The tortoise whirled and started for him.

It was Barney's chance and quick as a flash he slipped a noose over the other leg.

This capture was complete. The tortoise was *hors du combat* at once.

Then Frank and Barney began to draw the monster toward the Search when a thrilling thing occurred.

There lay half imbedded in the mud what looked to Frank like an old log.

He might have stepped over it but instead placed his foot upon it. The effect was startling.

Instantly the log developed signs of life and there was a tremendous commotion in the water.

A huge and giant form reared aloft and both divers were hurled aside like puppets.

Then a great wriggling form shot under the body of the Search and was gone giving the boat a heavy jar!

At first Frank had believed it to be a huge river serpent, but upon getting aboard the Search later, Prof. Smythe, who had obtained a good look at it, declared that it was a huge eel.

That it was full forty feet in length was certain. Surely the Amazon was a river of monsters.

The tortoise was dispatched while in the water and taken from its shell.

Then the shell was fastened on the forward deck, and the Search once more went on its way.

It is said that events never come singly, however.

It certainly proved so in this case, when suddenly there came shooting out of the black water a giant fish which, for a moment, looked like a whale.

The Search was in its path.

There was just time to send a cry of warning through the boat when the monster struck it.

It seemed for a moment as if everything was going to smash.

All portable articles were hurled about furiously, and not one of the crew kept his feet.

Only the fact that the hull of the Search was of the strongest steel saved it.

After examination showed a sizable dent in the steel plates where the fish had struck it.

The fish seemed like a variety of giant sturgeon.

The shock had proved more serious for it than for the boat, for it had proved fatal.

The fish floated along the bottom not fifty feet distant. The Search ran alongside and an examination was made.

The snout or nose of the fish had been completely crushed, and death must have been instantaneous.

"Gosh all hickories!" gasped Peleg Perkins. "I reckon a man to go a fishin' in these waters would need a pole as big as a pine tree and a line like the Atlantic cable. That dew beat my wife's relations."

Everybody laughed at this, as well as they could afford to, for no serious harm had come to them.

It was a lucky escape and Frank was not anxious to take the chances again.

Once more the Search went on its way up the Amazon.

Fresh wonders were encountered every day, and new incidents of thrilling sort were always transpiring.

But one morning, after a slow night's run between rocky shores, Frank declared:

"By to-morrow we shall have completed our thousand mile trip under the Amazon."

"You don't mean it!" gasped Smythe.

"Yes, I do."

"And we shall be near the spot where the diamonds were lost?"

"Exactly."

"Are we as near the Ica as that?"

"We are within twenty-five miles of the rapids. I shall proceed slowly all the way, for the wreck of the diamond hunters may be found anywhere along here."

All were now upon the qui vive.

As the submarine boat proceeded the search-light was employed. From shore to shore the quest was made.

Every object likely to be a sunken wreck was carefully scrutinized. And thus the search went on.

It was later in the day when they came to a mighty pool at the base of rapids. Here there was a literal nest of water serpents and alligators. And here Frank believed the treasure would be found.

CHAPTER X.

THE DIAMONDS.

THE young inventor believed that he had reached the spot in the river where the wreck had occurred.

It corresponded exactly with the description given.

No time was lost in at once prosecuting the search.

Frank took the southern bank of the river as the most likely part of the rapids for a boat to descend.

Here the submarine boat crept along the river bed, closely looking for the wreck.

There was a possibility that it might never be found. There was a chance that it was sunk forever in the river mud.

But Frank still clung to hope and would not give up the search.

The place was literally infested with alligators, and they were exceedingly aggressive as well.

Wherever the boat turned, one or more were disturbed in their lairs and were not at all times disposed to retreat.

Some of them showed fight and attacked the boat savagely. But fortunately it resisted all efforts.

It was not destined, however, that the quest should be long pursued without good results.

Suddenly Smythe, who had been watching the river bed intently, cried:

"I believe that is the wreck! Look and see."

Frank was instantly by his side.

The search-light was brought to bear upon the point in question, and there, imbedded in the river mud was plainly seen the upper deck of a boat.

"Hurrah!" cried Frank, "we have found it at last! Stand by, all, to anchor the Search."

The anchors were at once dropped and the Search rested alongside the sunken boat.

Then preparations were made to go out and explore it.

The upper deck was just above the bed of the river.

The current had kept this washed clean, though the companion way was somewhat blocked with debris.

It was now a somewhat serious question as to how the feat of ransacking the wreck could be accomplished without being devoured by the alligators.

They literally swarmed in the muddy depths about. The voyagers were for a time in a quandary.

Then Frank said:

"Barney, I think you and I will try it. If, however, you have any fears you need not attempt it."

"Fears!" exclaimed the Irishman. "Begorra, I parted company wid sich whin I jined wid yez, Misher Frank."

"Well said," exclaimed Frank. "Then we will go ahead."

"But how are you going to do it?" asked Prof. Smythe, anxiously.

Frank explained his plan. The professor, who was ever a cautious man, then tried to dissuade him.

"I would not attempt it," he said. "You will surely get into trouble."

But the young inventor smiled.

"Nothing venture, nothing have," he declared. "Bring out the diving suits, Barney."

But the Celt had already done this.

They speedily donned them.

The Search was worked as near to the wreck as possible. Then the two divers stepped out upon the deck.

Almost instantly as it seemed a giant form swooped down upon them. It was a monster alligator.

Frank instantly whirled his sharp ax over his head.

He made a vicious blow at the saurian.

It caught him across the upper jaw, laying it open and filling the water with blood.

The big creature dropped to the bed of the river apparently stunned.

Almost instantly another swooped down upon Barney.

Frank had the long keen-bladed lance which he had used with such effect once before.

This came into good service now.

Quick as a flash he launched it at the reptile. It was the means of saving Barney's life.

The Celt could not possibly have got out of the way in time to have avoided the monster's jaws.

The lance penetrated the alligator's eye to the brain.

It dropped dead instantly and floated away upon the current.

Those within the cabin had seen all this through the plate glass windows. It was needless to say they were elated.

"Ki-yi!" screamed Pomp, "jes' look at Marse Frank fix dem 'gators! Dey jes' got to git up in de morning fo' to fool him, yo' kin bet!"

As good fortune had it, these two specimens were the only ones at that moment in the near vicinity.

Frank saw the opportunity and made a sign to Barney.

Over the rail they went and sprung to the deck of the buried wreck. Debris choked the cabin way.

From far and near long dark forms were shooting to the spot. There was no time to lose.

Frank seized one of the timbers and pulled it from the companion-way. A mass of silt caved in and an aperture was revealed.

It was large enough to admit a man's form. This was enough.

Frank slid down through it. Barney followed just in time to evade ponderous jaws.

They were now in the cabin of the sunken boat. However, little could be seen of the boat's timbers, so deep was the deposit of mud and silt.

Both could hear the thump of the alligators' bodies upon the deck above.

The saurians were waiting for a reappearance of their victims. Frank and Barney knew this well.

The situation was not by any means a pleasant one.

How they were to ever get out of the place and back again to the Search was a most serious question.

However, they were now in the cabin of the sunken wreck and it was decided to first explore it.

This they proceeded to do.

If any of the bodies of the drowned explorers were on board there was no trace to be found of them now.

The main cabin, however, was likely to be in worse condition than any other compartment of the boat for it had been left exposed to the sweep of the river current.

The doors to other compartments were closed. As Frank hoped these were free of mud or debris.

It required some exertion and digging away of mud to open the door leading out of the main cabin.

But at length this was successfully accomplished and the two explorers went into the forward hold.

Here everything was in just as good order as when the boat had sunk.

Articles of furniture had fallen to decay. But in one corner of the compartment Frank saw a chest of drawers.

Some impulse taught him that this perchance was where the bag of diamonds was stored.

He made his way across to where this was and attempted to open one of the drawers.

It was locked.

However, with the point of his lance he forced the lock and opened the drawer.

The sight which he beheld was a thrilling one.

Bright gems glittered like stars as they lay there in the drawer.

The treasure was found.

That these were the diamonds spoken of in the story of Prof. Smythe there was no doubt.

The narrative of Captain Paul Davis was proved correct.

Frank was in the highest of spirits.

Barney was close by Frank, and gazed upon the treasure with wide open eyes and amazement.

He placed his helmet close to Frank's and shouted:

"Begorra, those are foine stones! Shure there's a fortune there!"

"The great treasure is found," replied Frank. "We have accomplished the object of our mission, Barney!"

"Them is the diamonds thin, sor?"

"Yes!"

"Shure it's glad I am av that. An' now shall we go back, sor?"

"We will presently."

Frank opened a capacious inner pocket in his diving suit, and placed the diamonds in it.

Then he examined all of the other drawers in the chest. There was nothing of value in them, save a small heap of gold coin.

This was undoubtedly the treasure spoken of by Captain Davis.

Yet he had described the diamonds as having been hidden away in a bag. But Frank understood this readily enough.

The gems might have been transferred at any time to the drawer, and the captain had doubtless forgotten the circumstance.

Frank made no doubt that these were the same diamonds.

Satisfied on this point, he was now only anxious to return to the Search.

There was no reason why they should not now at once begin the return trip down the Amazon.

The prime object of the expedition had been accomplished. Frank was satisfied.

An immense fortune would certainly accrue from the sale of these diamonds. Besides, the adventure of the expedition had given much pleasure.

Leaving the compartment, Frank and Barney once more entered the main cabin.

They crept up the stairway and ventured to peep out onto the deck. An appalling sight met their gaze.

It was literally covered with huge alligators.

It seemed as if they were really waiting for their intended victims to come out of the hold so that they might pounce upon them.

This was more and deeper instinct than Frank had ever given alligators credit for.

But this fact remained that they were there, and it was a large sized problem as to how they were to get back to the submarine boat safely.

It was a conundrum for a certainty. Just how to effect it was not clear.

Frank put his head as far out of the hatchway as possible.

A monster bull 'gator lay not three feet from him.

It opened its hideous jaws wide as if to draw him in. Frank could not resist the temptation upon him.

"I'll fix him!" he muttered.

Then he drew back with his lance and drove it full into the creature's mouth. The alligator let out a hoarse bellow and recoiled.

Blood filled the water. Instantly all the other alligators rushed forward. But though they sailed over the mouth of the hatch, they could not reach the two men within.

And this gave Frank the very opportunity he desired.

It was not a difficult matter to jab the saurians with his lance as they passed over.

Its heavy blade was strong enough to in many cases almost disembowel the monsters, but the position did not seem improved by this.

CHAPTER XI.

RUN AGROUND.

THE two men were yet hemmed in by the alligators.

To kill one or two or a few would not by any means furnish a means of getting back to the Search.

How long the saurians would remain in their present position it was not easy to say.

Certainly until their victims came out or they were convinced that they could not hope to get them.

Frank was at his wit's end for a device.

"Phwat the devil shall we do sor!" asked Barney, placing his helmet close to Frank's. "Shure it's stuck we are."

"It certainly looks like it," agreed Frank. "We must find some scheme. Can you not think of one?"

"Shure sor, I can't!"

Thus time passed.

Those on board the Search realized the situation but they seemed powerless to give any aid.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Prof. Symthe, in something like a fever of anxiety. "What can we do for them? They ought to be got out of that scrape somehow!"

"Golly, dat am a fac!" declared Pomp. "But we amn't got no diving suit, an' we kain't go out there without it."

It remained for the ingenuity of Peleg Perkins to devise a way out of the dilemma.

The Yankee had been coolly studying the situation.

Now he ejected a quid of tobacco from his mouth, and said:

"By gosh, I reckon I can git them durned critters outen thar in a hurry."

"You're the man we want," cried Prof. Smythe, "let's have your plan!"

Peleg took a fresh chew.

"I don't know much about this hyar electricity," he said, "but I reckon it kin kick pooty hard, kain't it?"

"Yes," replied the professor, "but what of that?"

"Eh! I reckon I'd kick them 'gators all outen thar with an electric wire!"

Pomp caught the idea instantly.

"Golly fo' jimcracks!" he gasped, "he am hit the idee fo' snah. Nuffin' could be bettah fo' a fac'. We'se jes' gwine to do dat fing."

The darky rushed into the engine room. It was but a few moments' work for him to connect a wire with the dynamos, while Peleg kept the air pump going for him.

The wire was charged heavily and a clever circuit was made so that a tremendous shock could be given.

It was a force sufficient to destroy human life. Certainly an ordinary alligator could not help but feel it.

Thus Pomp reasoned. He went into the pilot house.

Here there was a window with a curious slide so arranged that anything could be passed out of it without admitting the water.

Indeed the pressure of air on the interior of the Search was so great that just now water would hardly have entered anyway.

The wire fell over the rail and down upon the sands.

Pomp pushed on it until it crossed the bulwarks of the sunken boat.

He handled the wire with rubber gloves which protected him completely. He pushed the wire on.

Suddenly it came in contact with one of the 'gators.

The effect was thrilling.

The reptile was knocked completely over and lay stunned.

On to the next passed the deadly wire.

This creature was treated the same. Another instantly followed.

The wire being stiff and strong, Pomp could manipulate it fairly well by pushing.

It passed clear across the deck, clearing a path through the alligator crew.

The reptiles seemed to become imbued with terror, and bellowings of fear escaped them.

They scattered before the vivid flashes of the wire which were visible even under water.

Frank and Barney saw and comprehended the trick.

It worked better than Frank had anticipated that it would.

In fact, in a few moments the deck of the sunken boat was literally cleared of the reptiles.

It was the moment to act. Frank and Barney did so.

They sprang out of the cabin and started for the Search. They reached the rail and clambered aboard.

They were not a moment too soon.

Two big 'gators swooped down, but missed them. Contact with the wire knocked them over, however.

The joy of all at the result of the expedition was unbounded. It had been a glowing success.

The lost diamonds had been recovered in spite of the terrible nest of alligators which had held guard over it so many years.

Perhaps the most delighted of all was Smythe.

He fairly danced in his glee.

"I knew we should succeed!" he cried; "what a success our trip under the Amazon has been! It will set the world talking!"

"Don't say too much," said Frank. "We are not out of the woods yet. We have fully two thousand miles yet to travel to get back to the mouth of this big river. We are not home then!"

"True," agreed the professor; "but the chances are in our favor."

"Yes, slightly; at least we shall do our best."

But Frank knew that there were yet many perils to encounter before they got out of the mighty river.

The diamonds were spread out upon a table and carefully examined.

They were all of the first water and represented a large fortune.

After examining them Frank laid them all out upon the table and said:

"Now let us have a fair division. There is a large fortune represented in these stones. As for myself I do not care for it, as I have all the money I need. I consider that the success of this expedition is due to each member of this party, one perhaps not more than another. Now I suggest that we equally divide these stones among us. Are you all in favor of this?"

There was a moment of silence.

It was not that any one of the party coveted the entire treasure.

But they were overwhelmed with the generosity of Frank's nature.

"Why," exclaimed Smythe, in protest, "that is not right, Frank!"

"Why not?"

"The largest share belongs to you. You are the inventor of the Search, without which we could never have recovered this treasure."

"By gosh! thet's ther hang on't," cried Peleg, "thet's fair enough."

"I prefer an equal division," said Frank.

However, it was decided that Frank should include in his share the largest gem which had been dubbed, the Kohinoor 2nd. Then the division was made.

The jewels were placed in separate pouches, labeled, and Frank said:

"Now you have your choice, to carry these on your person, or place them in a private drawer in this cabin."

Smythe and Peleg preferred to carry their gems upon their persons. Pomp and Barney placed theirs with Frank's in a private drawer in the cabin.

This matter settled to the satisfaction of all, Frank went into the pilot house.

He at once opened the tank lever and the boat began to rise, lifting its anchor at the same time.

Up to the surface rose the Search and floated there.

They were upon the verge of the immense pool at the foot of the Ica rapids and it was noonday.

The sun beat down with tropical ferocity. The decks were quickly dried and awnings were spread.

For Frank had decided to make the return trip on the surface.

They had traveled one thousand miles under the Amazon. Now the young inventor proposed to travel on the surface.

They had seen the wonders under the great river. Now they proposed seeing the objects of interest along the shore.

And now a vast panorama of wonderful sort opened before them.

The mighty selvas which grew down to the water's edge were peopled with all forms of animal and bird life.

Everywhere were water monsters. Some even ventured to attack the boat.

But they were always worsted. In many a limpid black lagoon they battled with water pythons or giant alligators.

There was something new and exciting constantly on the tapis.

Time never dragged, and the day was never devoid of thrilling incident.

By night the great searchlight lit up the surface of the mighty river for a mile.

This attracted great schools of fish, which plunged in the van of the boat, and were cut to pieces in hundreds by the revolving screw.

But the larger denizens of the river, the alligators and serpents fled before the uncanny light, seeking the darkest depths of the river.

For days the boat kept on thus.

The spirits of all in the party were glib, and all were keenly enjoying the journey when the first of a series of exciting incidents occurred.

Barney was in the pilot-house serving morning watch.

It was just before sunrise, and the boat was drifting lazily along on the current, and Barney fell to dozing at the wheel.

It was a careless trick, and one he had never been guilty of before.

The result was that the prow of the boat turned into a dark lagoon. Suddenly there was a shock. Barney awoke suddenly in horror.

The boat had come to a stop.

It had run head on into a bank of deep mud, and there it stuck.

The Celt quickly reversed the engines, but it was of no use.

The boat would not stir. It was firmly anchored.

Dark woods were upon either hand, and great masses of vines drooped partly over the rail of the vessel. Barney was overwhelmed with remorse and terror.

"Och hone! phwat have I done!" he wailed. "Whatever will Mither Frank say now? Shure it's awful! The devil's luck that I should fall asleep!"

However, the mischief was done, and Barney knew there was no way but to make the best of it.

So he rang the alarm, and instantly everybody on board sprang up.

Frank knew at once that something had happened. The boat was stationary, and even before he reached the deck he guessed the cause of it.

He rushed out and looked about him. The truth was plain.

"My god!" he groaned, "we are aground!"

Barney was wringing his hands and walking the bridge wildly.

"Shure, Mither Frank," he cried, "it's me own fault! I fell ashlap. Wud yez give me to the alligators? Do annything to me yez will!"

For a moment Frank's brow clouded. But he saw the sincere grief of Barney and at once forgave him.

CHAPTER XII.

A FEARFUL DISASTER.

WITHOUT pausing to jaw the careless pilot Frank at once proceeded to examine the position of the Search.

She had been driven quite forcibly into the mass of clinging mud.

He saw at once that it would be no light work to set her free, and yet he hoped to do this.

All were enlisted in the task.

A canoe was got out and Barney and Pomp took a cable from the windlass across to the opposite shore of the lagoon.

This was passed about a heavy tree trunk. Then the capstan, worked by electricity, began to work.

The Search was moved in her muddy bed. Indeed, she slid back full two inches. Frank was encouraged.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "We shall fetch her out yet!"

The spirits of all arose.

The strain upon the cable was a most tremendous one and there was the risk.

But Frank manipulated the engines steadily so that the strain was slow.

Inch by inch the submarine boat was being drawn from her muddy bed when a thrilling turn of affairs came.

Suddenly there came startling sounds from the shore.

Frank looked and felt a chill.

There were congregated a dense number of South American natives armed and bristling with hostility.

At the same moment the mouth of the lagoon was literally choked with war canoes each filled with warriors.

It was a critical moment.

"Golly fo' glory!" yelled Pomp. "We're in fo' trubble now, Marse Frank!"

"Mercy on us," gasped Smythe, "that is a bad outlook."

But Frank acted quickly.

"Into the cabin every one!" he cried, quickly, "look out for poisoned darts!"

The order was quickly obeyed.

All knew the deadly peril of being exposed to the deadly darts used by the Ybarri Indians.

These were propelled by a blow-pipe made of a reed and could be thrown easily a hundred yards.

The tip of the dart was saturated with a malignant poison secured from the fangs of a deadly spider found in the deep forests.

The effect of the poison was much worse than that of the tarantula, the victim dying in awful agony.

These darts rained down upon the deck of the Search.

A moment more of delay, and some one of the party must have been struck by them.

Once in the cabin, every man seized his rifle and opened fire upon the savage crew.

The battle opened briskly, and for a time raged furiously.

Of course the defenders of the Search had the advantage, for they were protected by the steel hull.

They shot down dozens of the foe, but this did not seem to deter them from still coming on to the attack.

"What shall we do?" cried Smythe, in alarm; "they are certainly going to come aboard of this boat."

This was true.

The defenders of the Search could not shoot them fast enough to deter them from their onward progress.

Soon they would be aboard.

At such close quarters the result could not help but be speedy.

They must surely break into the cabin, and in that event the sequel would be short and swift.

Frank saw this at once and realized the necessity of desperate work.

It was impossible to get the boat out of the mud in time to evade the foe. This was out of question.

But the young inventor had another plan in readiness.

He was not to be so easily baffled, and very quickly changed the face of matters.

Springing into the chemical room he emerged with a wide platform. This had glass legs, and he placed it by the loop-holes through which the firing was done.

"Get upon this!" he commanded. "I am going to charge the hull of the boat! This will enable you to escape the shock!"

The command was obeyed.

All stood upon the platform. They kept up a fire just the same, while Frank went below to the dynamo room.

It was but short work for the young inventor to bring a current to bear upon the steel hull of the boat.

He placed the wires in such a position that by pressing a small key he held in his hand, the whole boat would be instantly charged.

Carrying the key and a number of feet of wire with him he returned to the cabin.

Here he got upon a glass stool in the pilot house.

He could look out through the windows and saw the enemy alongside in their canoes.

They came swarming over the rail like bees.

It was the critical moment.

Frank opened the key and the tremendous current passed into the hull.

It contained many thousand volts, and no human power could withstand it.

By dozens the natives were knocked lifeless overboard into the river to drown.

The faster they climbed over the rail the faster they dropped.

Every one so venturesome as to come in contact with the steel hull suffered.

It was not until fully a hundred of them had suffered such a shock that the remainder began to feel and comprehend the situation.

That is to say, they could not comprehend why it was their companions were so instantly prostrated the moment they struck the hull

But they realized that this was the case, and those in the other canoes held aloof.

They now began to rapidly change sentiment and were more cautious.

One canoe cautiously approached the Search. A giant Ybarri in the prow put a hand upon the steel hull.

He was instantly hurled ten feet away and sank in the river.

This settled the matter at once.

With yells of baffled terror the savages retreated to the shore.

They drew their canoes up the bank and secreted themselves in the bushes.

Then they opened fire upon the boat with their poisoned darts.

These fell thickly upon the deck but of course did no harm.

However, they had one detrimental effect for our voyagers.

It kept them closely in the cabin, for they knew that to expose themselves upon the deck meant death.

Darkness began to settle down fast, and Frank now realized the purpose of the foe.

They hoped to make a fresh attack then, and unseen succeed in getting aboard.

Prof. Smythe realized this, and said to Frank:

"Do you think we will have to remain standing upon these glass stools all night?"

"I'll fix that," said Frank.

He discharged the hull of the vessel. Then he went below, and with Barney's assistance several of the glass-legged platforms were brought out.

These had been constructed with just such an emergency in view.

Blankets were spread upon these, and Frank said:

"We shall all sleep on these to-night. Whoever keeps watch can hold the key, and turn on the current if the attack is renewed. I don't believe it will be."

And this programme was carried out.

When it became time to retire all but Pomp laid down upon the glass-legged platforms and slept.

The darty was in the pilot-house upon a glass stool, keeping watch, with the electric key in his hand.

The search-light was turned full upon the shore.

The Ybarris were there in force, watching the stranded vessel, but they did not venture to come to the attack.

The darkness they had waited for did them no good.

The search-light made all as plain as day, and they could make no unseen movement.

But they made other characteristic demonstrations. They built huge fires upon the shore, and danced about them like fiends, yelling and screaming.

This could do no harm to their foes, however, and no attention was paid to it.

Morning was yet far away, when a heavy peal of thunder woke the echoes of the selvas.

Jagged lightning played across the heavens, and pattering drops of rain began to fall.

It came down soon in torrents. So fierce was the storm, that the fires on shore were quenched.

Until daylight the torrent continued.

Then the clouds cleared away and the rising sun lit up the wet landscape.

It had brought deliverance to the voyagers.

The water had swelled the lagoon over its banks.

The submarine boat was fairly lifted out of the mud.

It floated once more.

When Pomp realized this he sounded the alarm and called all on deck.

Their joy was intense.

The boat drifted out into the current of the Amazon once more.

Down upon the broad flood it swept once more on its course to the sea.

The escape from death in the dismal lagoon had been a narrow one.

It was safe to say that Barney would never again go to sleep at his post.

For several days no noteworthy incident occurred.

Hundreds of miles were reeled off by the speedy little boat. Then one day the mouth of the Xingu was reached and they were near the sea.

The wonderful trip was nearly ended.

"It is certainly the most wonderful on record!" cried Smythe, "the world will read of it with interest."

"Why do you not write a book on it?" asked Frank.

"I certainly shall!" replied the savant.

"B'gosh! I'll speak fer a copy now!" cried Peleg. "Yew bet I allus like to read about myself, and in course yew'll put me in it!"

"Oh, of course!" laughed the professor.

But a tragic event was near at hand. It had remained until the very last end of the expedition for this to occur.

Just below the Xingu, the submarine boat suddenly met with a terrific shock.

It shook her from stem to stern. Everybody on board was prostrated and nigh knocked senseless.

There was an awful grinding crash. Timbers flew in the air, and it seemed as if the Search was going to pieces.

Frank Reade, Jr., rushed out on deck.

He saw the truth at a glance. With awful pallid face he rushed back post haste into the cabin.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHICH IS THE END.

"For your lives, everyone!" he shouted, "the boat is going down!"
"Going down?" cried Smythe, appalled. "My God! Do not say that, Frank!"

"It is the truth!"
"By gosh!" cried Peleg, catching up a life preserver. "I reckon we're food for them durned alligators, now!"

"No!" cried Frank. "We must get out one of the big rubber canoes. They are in the after cabin. Lively!"

Barney and Pomp were already after the boat. They came out with it quickly in its portable state.

The water was rushing into the Search like a mill race.

There was no time to lose.

The pontoon was quickly unfolded and framed. Barney and Pomp seized paddles.

It was carried to the rail which was now nearly on a level with the surface of the river.

There was barely time to leap in and push off. When not one hundred yards from the Search, the big boat lurched and went down.

With swimming eyes and sinking hearts all saw this tragic event. Frank Reade, Jr., the young inventor, thus saw the end of his wonderful production, the like of which did not exist on the globe.

"That is too bad," said Smythe, in a choking voice. "All our work is undone. It is awful. My specimens are lost."

"Hemlocks an' hickories!" spluttered Peleg. "I'm durned glad I put my diamonds in my pocket. I hain't lost them."

"Nor I!" cried the professor, "but the others have!"

This was true.

Frank's as well as Barney's and Pomp's share of the gems were at the bottom of the river.

But Frank said nothing.

He cared not so much for them as he did for the loss of his pet boat.

"The Search was a good boat!" he finally said, "but she is gone and there's no use crying over it. I shall now proceed to build a better one."

After the whirlpool caused by the sinking boat had subsided, the party paddled back and examined the spot to find the cause of the wreck.

A sharp jagged spire of rock was found. Its top was hardly a foot under the water.

But its sides sloped down in the form of a shaft to the bottom two hundred feet or more.

There the Search occupied her everlasting grave.

"For," said Frank, "it will never pay to raise her. But we will some day come back here and dive for the diamonds and—your valuable specimens, Prof. Smythe."

"Do you mean that, Frank?" cried the professor, in delight.

"Oh, yes!"

After having settled the question of the fate of the submarine boat, the canoe was paddled away down the Amazon.

Fifty miles below the Xingu the party, exhausted and half starved, fell in with a plantation barge.

Gradually they worked their way down the coast to Rio, and finally got a steamer to New York.

And thus ended the most wonderful of Frank Reade, Jr.'s trips under the Amazon for a thousand miles.

The feat has never been equaled before nor since, and it probably will not be for many years.

Prof. Smythe returned to Washington loaded down with experiences and knowledge newly gained.

Peleg Perkins went back to Squashtown and paralyzed his copatriots with his blazing diamonds and well-filled pockets.

While Frank Reade, Jr., and Barney and Pomp were glad to get back to Readestown and plan for an expedition into some other part of the world in the near future.

[THE END.]

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